

MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES (DPHHS)
FOOD AND CONSUMER SAFETY SECTION

Program: Food Processing Establishments
Food Service and Processing at Retail

ID Number: FP 28-01
FS 38-01

Legal Ref: ARM 37.110.204 FOOD SUPPLIES (1)
ARM 16.10.304 FOOD SUPPLIES (1)
FPM 31-97 Produce, Fruit, Fungi, Garden Herbs...¶ 5

Date: June 22, 2001

1. Purpose: To provide guidance on the use of wild mushrooms, including “morels” (*Morchella* sp.) in establishments engaged in retail food service and food processing at retail. Existing policy and rule prohibits the use of wild non-cultivated mushroom species in food service establishments and food establishments performing processing at retail, except those mushrooms that have been produced by a licensed and approved Food Manufacturer (F-13). Previous policy statements are amended and changed by this statement, including FPM 19-88. In FPM 31-97, only paragraph 5 is affected. FP 24-89 & FS 33-89 are herewith rescinded.

2. Considerations: Inquiries and requests have thus far centered on the use of “morels” (*Morchella* sp.) in restaurants, food preparation and processing for sale to the public. Investigation by FCSS has discerned that the several species of morel mushrooms that grow on wildlands in the northern Rocky Mountain area are used for food extensively. Where appropriate and accurate identification is utilized, and where adequate cooking is done, wild morels are routinely eaten without the occurrence of discernable intoxications or illness.

Furthermore, identification and differentiation of morels from “false morels” is reputed to be possible on a reliable basis, with relative ease, by experienced identifiers. Field identification of morels is commonly practiced by hikers, mushroom collectors, and others utilizing minimal training. Reports from trained identifiers indicate that reliable field identification of morels is a skill that is becoming more common among pickers, restaurateurs and dealers. The prohibition against the use of morels appears to be inappropriate in the face of valid applications for the use of morels.

3. Interpretation:

(A) Collecting and drying morels does not constitute processing, and no license is required. If they are properly identified, wild collected morels are regarded as being from an approved source. The morels must be clean, insect free and otherwise unadulterated.

(B) In the circumstance of food service facilities, and facilities processing at retail, morel mushrooms, (*Morchella* sp.) may be used for sale to the public under one of 2 circumstances listed below.

(i) Restaurants, retail stores and others engaged in processing at retail may use and sell morels if they employ a person to identify the morels who is recognized as competent in the identification of safe botanical or mycological species including morels. Documentation regarding source and identifier recognition should be kept on file, and made available during inspections of the retail facility.

(ii) Commercial processors who deal in wholesale distribution or sales of morel mushrooms may process and sell morels to stores, restaurants and other wholesale customers if they employ an identifier or contract with an identifier who is recognized as competent in the identification of safe botanical or mycological species of morels. A specific license is not required. If the wholesaler happens to be a licensed Manufacturer or food distributor, documentation regarding source and identifier recognition should be kept on file, and made available during inspections, and the products should be packaged and labeled.

(C) The department will not evaluate the training, education, length of experience or coursework in taxonomy of macrofungi, or other technical criteria, of morel identifiers. The identifier must be able to establish in writing that they are “recognized” as competent in this field, by an authority qualified to evaluate the applicants’

knowledge and competence. Acceptance of such morels as being from an approved source, based on the competence of an identifier will be species-specific to morels only. Other species of wild fungi are discussed in paragraph F below.

(D) Morels and other species of wild mushrooms that are cultivated, grown, harvested, and processed by an operation that is approved by the regulatory agency having jurisdiction, are not affected by this policy.

(E) The use of a qualified and recognized identifier does not mitigate the liability or responsibility of the licensed retail operator, or the commercial seller, to sell only safe, non-toxic and otherwise uncontaminated products, or to obtain food ingredients from approved sources.

(F) Other species of wildland or volunteer mushrooms may not be used or sold in licensed commercial or retail food establishments unless they are reviewed and identified individually by an identification expert acceptable to the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services, Food & Consumer Safety Section, using criteria of expertise, recognition of competence, and minimum training certification from a recognized authority for the species to be processed and sold, or using the criteria of USFDA for expertise. Proposals will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

Reference: FPM 31-97 Produce, Fruit, Fungi, Garden Herbs... ¶ 5

Signature of Program Manager: _____

Approved: Supervisor: Howard Reid R. S., Food & Consumer Safety Section

Signature: _____